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ABSTRACT

The search for knowledge about effective teachers has produced a great deal of research activity utilizing a variety of research techniques. This paper discusses research on national Teachers of the Year (Shanoski and Hranitz, 1989, 1990, 1991) and relates it to the teacher effectiveness clusters identified by Donald Cruikshank (1990) in his study of effective teaching research. Cruickshank's clusters are: (1) teacher character traits; (2) what the teacher knows; (3) what the teacher teaches; (4) what the teacher expects; (5) how the teacher teaches; (6) how the teacher reacts to pupils; and (7) how the teacher manages the classroom. Utilizing this knowledge base, an instrument to determine the level of teaching effectiveness is presented as a tool to identify personal involvement in teaching and teaching skills. It is concluded that the Shanoski and Hranitz research supports the research review on effective teaching done by Cruikshank. Results indicate that levels of personal involvement in teaching and teaching skills can be identified; guidance and specific training opportunities can then be provided to develop and increase skills and behaviors. An instrument, "Level of Teaching Effectiveness," which utilizes the knowledge base on effective teaching, is appended. (LL)

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LEARNING FROM AMERICA'S BEST TEACHERS: BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH EXCELLENCE

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Abstract

The Shanoski and Hranitz research on Pennsylvania and national Teachers of the Year (1989, 1990, 1991) is discussed as it relates to the teacher effectiveness clusters identified by Cruickshank (1990). Utilizing this knowledge base, an instrument to determine the level of teaching effectiveness is presented as a tool to identify personal involvement in teaching and teaching skills.

It is generally held that teachers have a great impact on the outcomes of schooling. As a result, school districts want to select and retain effective teachers and teacher education institutions want to determine what effective teachers are like and how they teach, in order to guide the development of teacher preparation programs.The search for knowledge about effective teachers has produced a great deal of research activity utilizing a variety of research techniques. From his study of effective teaching research, Cruickshank (1990) has organized teacher effectiveness variables into seven clusters: 1) teacher character traits; 2) what the teacher knows; 3) what the teacher teaches; 4) what the teacher expects; 5) how the teacher teaches; 6) how the teacher reacts to pupils and 7) how the teacher manages the classroom. The purpose of this paper is to describe how the research of Shanoski and Hranitz (1989, 1990, 1991) on Teachers of the Year relates to these clusters and, based on their findings, to present an instrument for identifying teacher effectivenss.

The approach to research on outstanding teachers used by Shanoski and Hranitz (1989, 1990, 1991) was to develop a portrait of Teachers of the Year. They investigated Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year winners and nominees for the past twenty-five years and national Teachers of the Year for four years. These teachers were nominated by superintendents, principals, fellow teachers and parents as being outstanding within their school districts. The final selection process often included completing essay questions, being interviewed and on site observation and videotaping of teaching. The following is a discussion of the Shanoski and Hranitz findings (1989, 1990, 1991) as they relate to the teacher effectiveness clusters identified by Cruickshank (1990).

Teacher Character Traits

Important teacher characteristics identified in the Shanoski and Hranitz studies were: love of knowledge, loves children, enthusiasm and excellent communication skills. Flexibility, a sense of humor, commitment and open mindedness are also seen as important. Task and achievement oriented, holding high expectations for students, not accepting student stereotypes and feeling responsible for student learning are also highly valued. These characteristics are compatible with Cruickshank's review of research on character traits.

One variable which was specifically addressed in the national Teacher of the Year questionnaire was "Are you a risk taker?" All of the 1991 Teacher of the Year respondents and ninety-four percent of the 1988-1989

respondents indicated that they are risk takers. They described their willingness to make decisions, "to stick their necks out" for their students, to challenge the administration and school board and to try new ideas and materials. As one teacher related: "It is better to ask forgiveness than permission".

What the Teacher Knows

Cruickshank suggests that effective teachers are knowledgable in their subject fields, possess a great deal of factual information and are skilled in using their knowledge. Shanoski and Hranitz found that outstanding teachers have pursued their education, adding to their knowledge and expertise in their fields. The majority of outstanding teachers in their studies hold a master's degree and/or have completed additional credits beyond the master's degree and several have earned a doctorate. In addition, outstanding teachers are frequently utilized as mentors for new teachers, in staff development activities and in curriculum revision. Analysis of undergraduate self-reported Grade Point Averages (G.P.A.'s) indicated that outstanding teachers were very good students. The majority reported G.P.A.s between 3.0-4.0 with more individuals reporting G.P.A.s between 3.5-4.0 that 3.0-3.49.

What the Teacher Teaches

Shanoski and Hranitz found that outstanding teachers diagnose students and select curricula based on students' needs. Commitment to their students' learning and a sense of accountability prevail. Cruickshank's research suggests that effective teachers not only cover the material, but also go beyond the minimum amount required.

How the Teacher Teaches

Factors related to the art of teaching which were identified by both Cruickshank and Shanoski and Hranitz are: clarity, fairness, organized, well prepared, challenges and motivates students to higher learning goals, demonstrates and expects higher order questions and critical thinking, encourages active student participation, willingness to try something new, checks for student comprehension and provides students with feedback.

What the Teacher Expects

Similar to Cruickshank's findings, Shanoski and Hranitz found that

outstanding teachers in their studies establish high expectations for their students. In addition, students are encouraged to expect the best from themselves and they are held accountable.

How the Teacher Reacts to Students.

As one teacher in the Shanoski and Hranitz studies related, she has an "I care" attitude. This remark is typical of outstanding teachers who respect their students, are accepting, and aware of and sensitive to individual learning differences. In addition, outstanding teachers actively listen to students' concerns and expressed needs, help students to reflect on their thoughts and ideas and affirm and support students in their learning efforts. These variables were also found in Cruickshank's review of research.

How The Teachers Manage

The Shanoski and Hranitz studies confirm what Cruickshank found relative to teacher classroom management. Outstanding teachers are excellent organizers and managers of learning groups who are persistent and efficient in optimizing academically engaged time.

Teacher Roles

While most of the research cited by Cruickshank identified one major role of teachers, to instruct, to counsel, to manage, etc., the three roles identified in the Shanoski and Hranitz research point out the multifaceted complexity of teaching. The teacher roles most frequently identified as important in the Shanoski and Hranitz research are that of a Skilled Instructor, Diagnostician and Counselor.

Conclusions

The Shanoski and Hranitz research supports the research review on effective teaching done by Cruickshank. Attached to this study is an instrument, "Level of Teaching Effectiveness", which utilizes this knowledge base on effective teaching. Levels of personal involvement in teaching and teaching skills can be identified. Guidance and specific training opportunities can then be provided to develop and increase skills and behaviors. Outstanding teachers, identified by Shanoski and Hranitz, might well serve as models, mentors, and leaders to be utilized by school districts and higher education to provide these training opportunities.

LEVEL OF TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS

Level of Personal Involvement in Teaching	**High**	**Moderate**	**Low**
Enthusiasm			
Risk Taker			
Concern for Students			
demonstrates an "I care" attitude			
works with parents and school support personnel			
Professional Development			
courses taken:_____			
educational journals and books read: _____			
conferences &/or workshops attended: _____			
conference &/or workshop presentations:_____			
School Involvement			
mentors new teachers			
joins building committees			
joins district committees			
shares materials, ideas			
Community Involvement			

Level of Teaching Skill	**High**	**Moderate**	**Low**
diagnoses students' learning needs			
provides for individual differences			

Level of Teaching Skill	High	Moderate	Low
checks for student comprehension			
provides students with feedback			
sets high expectations			
encourages students to expect the best from themselves			
encourages student participation			
uses motivational techniques			
utilizes a variety of approaches/ strategies			
uses a variety of levels of questions			
demonstates knowledge of subject matter			
time on task			
communication skills			

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